



Proud of our Veterans,
Proud of America!

THE epicenter

Newsletter of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) • August 2003

23rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games

VAPAHCS sent 30 athletes to the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world. All athletes were military veterans who use wheelchairs due to spinal cord impairment, certain neurological conditions, orthopedic amputations or other disabilities.

Melvin Silva, president of the Bay Area and Western Paralyzed Veterans of America Chapter, located at VAPAHCS, competed in the 23rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games, held in Long Beach, CA July 5-9, 2003. He competed in the following events: bowling (handleball), power chair 220, (hand control), 9-ball (quad), Exhibition Event: Power Soccer, air guns (quad). "I have competed in the Wheelchair Games for 13 years," said Silva. "It's great to keep making new friends and finding out that I can do more than I ever imagined. The experience of new places and people keeps me coming back year after year."

Athletes in the Games compete within three divisions - Masters (over age 40), Novice (first-time competitors in wheelchair sports), and Open (all others, or those who chose to compete in this category). They also compete within classes according to the level of their physical ability, with three quadriplegic-level classes (IA, IB, and IC), and four paraplegic-level or amputee classes (II, III, IV, and V). Silva competes as a Class 1C in the Masters division.

The Games were presented by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), and were hosted this year by the VA Long Beach Healthcare System and the California PVA Chapter. Funded with help from a host of corporations and service organizations, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games are a showcase for the benefit of sports rehabilitative programs, and the remarkable athletic abilities and personal achievements of our nation's disabled veterans.



Melvin Silva shown bowling at the National Wheelchair Games.

What's Inside ...

A Word From Our Director	2	Stay Fit in the Heat!	6
CARES Commission Hearings	3	You Make a Difference!	7
New Health Systems Specialist Selected	4	HACU Students Gain Experience	7
New WBRC Service Chief Named	4	CFC Cookbook Entries Needed	8
Employee News	5	CARES Comment Form	8

A Word From Our Director



**Elizabeth Joyce Freeman, Director
VA Palo Alto Health Care System**

As we enter the last quarter of this fiscal year, I want to acknowledge the many contributions you have made toward meeting our numerous and challenging performance measures and in providing world-class care for our veterans. Ms. Noelle Hall and Dr. Ellen Shibata continue to provide outstanding leadership in attempting to meet our performance goals in adherence to clinical practice guidelines and other clinical interven-

tions. Mr. Ken Owens and the MCCC staff are making terrific strides toward reaching our MCCC goals. All of you are contributing to our goals of increasing veteran satisfaction with our services in both the inpatient and outpatient arenas. We have made outstanding progress in fulfilling the VHA and Congressional mandates on both SCI staffing levels and Long Term Care capacity. We are making significant progress toward reducing waiting times in key clinical areas for both new and existing patients thanks to Dr. Ezeji-Okoye and all the Ambulatory Care staff. Finally, we continue to be among the growing number of VA health care systems that do not maintain waiting lists for care. We continue to receive accolades for the excellence of our teaching programs and our leadership in mental health. I am very appreciative of the teamwork and collaborative efforts taking place throughout VAPAHCS.

We are rapidly receiving instructions regarding mandated changes in the organization and reporting structures of some of our administrative services. Secretary Principi approved the VA CFO reorganization on June 24, 2003. The goal of this reorganization is to strengthen the operations of the field in finance, logistics and capital asset management to achieve better results, improved compliance and greater consistency. Numerous functions within our health care system will report to the VISN office once implementation issues have been finalized. These functions include: financial internal re-

views; payroll; employee travel; accounts receivable; accounting; payments of certified invoices; fee payments; contracting; commodity standardization; purchasing. In addition, a VISN Capital Asset Manager position will be established. This person will have responsibility for virtually all VISN capital programs including construction, equipment and information technology acquisitions. The VAPAHCS staff most impacted by these changes are staff within Fiscal Service and the Fee Section of the Business Office. It is anticipated the implementation issues will take six to nine months to be resolved. I will continue to provide the affected staff and all of you more information as it becomes available.

As a new component of the CARES process, we recently received a request from the VHA Under Secretary for Health to evaluate changing the operations of the Livermore Division from a twenty-four-hour a day operation to an eight-hour a day operation (essentially relocating the nursing home and sub-acute functions to other locations). We provided a response to this request in mid-June. We were one of several health care systems asked to provide additional information for possible inclusion in the VHA CARES plan. The VA CARES plan is anticipated to be released from the Secretary to the CARES Commission in late July. At that time, we will know whether our response was included in the plan for the Commission to consider. The final results of the entire CARES process are not anticipated until December 2003. Two members of the CARES Commission made a preliminary site visit to VAPAHCS on July 22 and 23, 2003. The formal CARES Commission hearings are now scheduled for October 1, 2003, at Palo Alto, California, and October 2, 2003, in Sacramento, California.

Finally, I want to again commend Ms. Donna McCartney, Executive Director PAIRE and former Acting Administrative Officer for Research and Dr. Fredric Kraemer, ACOS for Research, and their staff for their outstanding results and relentless efforts in meeting the requirements of the VHA Research Stand down. In addition, they have put into place excellent tools for use in maintaining the high standards required from the stand down.

I hope all of you are enjoying your summer and finding time to get refreshed before another challenging year begins!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth J. Freeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "J" and "F".

**Elizabeth Joyce Freeman,
Director**

CARES Commission Hearings

**October 1, 2003
10 AM**

**VA Palo Alto Health Care System
Auditorium, Building 101
3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA**

**October 2, 2003
10 AM**

**Garden Pavilion
Operated by LionsGate Hotel at McClellan Park
5640 Dudley Boulevard
McClellan, CA**

Purpose

The CARES Commission Hearings on the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) process will allow audience members to listen to oral testimonies provided by VA Sierra Pacific Network stakeholders on the CARES process and how the Draft National CARES Plan will impact VA medical facilities in the Network. The Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, established the CARES Commission to provide an objective, independent review of the Draft National CARES Plan.

Attendance

The Commission Hearings are open to the public. The public may listen to oral testimony from VA Sierra Pacific Network's stakeholders and submit written comments to the Commission about the Draft National CARES Plan at the Hearing.

Written comments can be provided to the Commission on their web site <http://www.carescommission.va.gov/>. Click on "Contact CARES Commission" at bottom of page.

New Health Systems Specialist Selected



Nora Lynn Buluran has joined VAPAHCS as the new Health Systems Specialist for the Chief of Staff. Buluran will be responsible for a wide range of duties related to clinical programs, sharing agreements, project coordination, and strategic planning.

Prior to working at VAPAHCS, Buluran was a Public Health Analyst with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in Bethesda, Maryland for five years. At HRSA, she worked on programs that improved health care access to the nation's underserved and vulnerable populations. In 2000, she received the HRSA Administrator's Distinguished Service Award for developing, implementing, and administering a new Federal grant program, the Community Access Program.

Buluran earned a Masters of Health Science degree in Health Policy and a Certificate in Health Finance and Management at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. She also has a Bachelors of Science degree in Physiology and a Minor in Japanese from the University of California at Davis. As a California native, Buluran is excited to be back home. She enjoys dancing, running, and spending time with her family and friends.

New Service Chief Named for Western Blind Rehabilitation Center



Elizabeth (Liz) L. Jessen has been selected as the new Service Chief for the Western Blind Rehabilitation Center (WBRC). Jessen will be responsible for the operations of our regional blind rehabilitation program, which serves eleven of the western states.

Jessen has been an employee of VAPAHCS for the past fifteen years starting as an intern at the WBRC. After her internship in 1988 she began her career as a Recreation Therapist working in Facilities and Long Term Care. In 1991 she was

assigned to the WBRC. In 1995 she was hired as a Blind Rehabilitation Specialist in the Manual Skills treatment area of blind rehabilitation. Since 1998, she has worked in a split position as a Blind Rehabilitation instructor and as a Visual Impairment Service Team (VIST) Coordinator. Throughout her career she has been considered to be a progressive program designer and a forward thinker.

Jessen is a graduate of San Jose State University with a degree in Recreation Administration with an emphasis in Therapeutic Recreation. She successfully completed the VA Management Development Class 18 and is currently in the VISN 21/22 Leadership Development Institute. She is starting to pursue a Masters Degree in Health Administration. Throughout her tenure at the VAPAHCS, she has been a very active staff member and has been involved in a number of successful projects. One of the earlier projects was the Vice President of the original Board of Directors to establish the Whistle Stop Child Care Center at the Palo Alto Division. She has been on a number of goal sharing projects, the latest was to develop the continuum of care for Visually Impaired Veterans. As a member of the CARF steering committee, she contributed to the Blind Centers achievement of eleven exemplary and one recommendation. Each year since 1991 she has served as an expert cross-country ski instructor at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic and is a recipient of The Nordic Ski Instructor Extradonare Presented by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in 2000. As a volunteer, she works as a disability awareness trainer for the Environmental Traveling Companions agency based out of San Francisco. She enjoys riding and repairing bicycles, hiking, outdoor activities, playing the flute and saxophone, and spending time with her family and friends.

EMPLOYEE NEWS

New Employees

Anesthesiology Svc.
Jacqueline Basinger

Business Office
Eva Maldonado-Tipton

Chaplain Svc.
Susan G. Turley

Chief of Staff
Nora Lynn Buluran

Engineering Svc.
Nicanor Cruzata
Yoseif Fesseha
W. Ken Harrell
Wesley Skelton

Environmental Mgmt. Svc.
Reginald Bergen
Giao D. Duong
Carmen J. Jones

Human Resources Mgmt. Svc.
Robert Ferrier
Lynne Mc Nerney
Kristin Shinoda

Medical Svc.
Anita Samantaray

Nursing Svc.
Chito Aqui
Consuelo Balaoing
Lourdes Bote
Maribeth Cambridge
Marissa Carino
Mary Cham
Joanne Chien
Melinda Daco
Matthew Divina
Mark Floding
Rachel Gardner
Brian Guzman
Kirsten Hygelund
Dale Lam
Ivy Liao
Coraleen Martinez
Florence Naranjo
Padma Patel
Donna Phan
Sagal Sadiq
Elaine-Ann Salak
Glenda M. Thomas
Thomas Trang

Nutrition & Food Svc.
Cornelia Pascual

Pathology & Laboratory Svc.
Candace K. Satterlee

Pharmacy Svc.
Samantha S. Alimardani
Timothy Walker

Physical Medicine & Rehab.
Megan E. Mc Laughlin
Lam G. Trieu

Physicians
Hooshmand Nayersina

Police Svc.
John Calvo
Gregory McGee

Research Svc.
Elizabeth Condliffe
Lindsey Grissom
Arik M. Healey
Melanie Jewell
Narciso Lintag
Anthony Masaquel
Smita A. Shukla
June Srisethnil
Stephen W. Tracy
Steven W. Villafranca
Amy T. Wong
Fareed A. Yahya

Social Work Svc.
Clemintine Benjamin
James Brennan
Michael Wolfe

Surgical Svc.
Alan Zeichner

Ward Administration Svc.
Bob Abujen
Debbra Clarke
Edward Mallard
Robyn Turner

Retirees

Lilian Beltran (31)
Nursing Svc.

Rex Jamison (11)
Medical Svc.

Ted Pearson (21)
Engineering Svc.

Paul Troop (35)
Nursing Svc.

Shirley Warren (15)
Social Work Svc.

(Years of service in parentheses.)

Employee Service Awards

10 Years

Robert Malmstrom
Pharmacy Svc.
Maria Ramos
Nursing Svc.
Suet Yin Yu
Medical Svc.

15 Years

Titania Araneta
Nursing Svc.
Renee Carson
Nursing Svc.
Grant Halischuck
Psychiatry Svc.
Katherine Krueger
Nursing Svc.
Marlaine Meyer
Nursing Svc.
Judy Millendez
Nursing Svc.

Belen Miranda

Nursing Svc.
Larry Mole
Chief of Staff
Sauleone Nemaia
Nursing Svc.
Mariano Rafanan
Research Svc.
G. Triadafilopoulos
Medical Svc.

20 Years

Imelda Arguelles
Nursing Svc.
Rosario Callejas
Nursing Svc.
Christina Fimbres
Dental Svc.
Gloria Holmes
Nursing Svc.
Lisa Pruitt
Nursing Svc.

Eloise Russell

Nursing Svc.
Lina Terlaje
Nursing Svc.

25 Years

Gregorio Borromeo
Nursing Svc.
Jaime Corona
Prosthetics Svc.
Virginia De Guzman
Voluntary Svc.
Mark Diehl
Dental Svc.
Sharon Kasof
Nursing Svc.
Shirley Martinez
Nursing Svc.
Indiana Solis
Information Resources Mgmt.
Coleen Wong
Radiology Svc.

30 Years

John Dunavant
Nursing Svc.
Dennis Glover
Nursing Svc.
James Moses
Psychology Svc.
Roxana Norville
Research Svc.

35 Years

Howard Lee
Information Resources Mgmt. Svc.
James Pitzer
Engineering Svc.

45 Years

Julianne Guzman
Medical Svc.
Jon Kosek
Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

Stay Fit in the Heat!

Warm weather means activities and fun under the sun! Whether you love putting on shorts and feeling the warm outdoors, or find it hot and sticky, everyone must be careful not to let a heat-related illness spoil the day. Normally, the body has ways of keeping itself cool, by letting heat escape through the skin, and by evaporating sweat (perspiration). If the body does not cool properly or does not cool enough, the victim may suffer a heat-related illness. Anyone can be susceptible although the very young and very old are at greater risk. Heat-related illnesses can become serious or even deadly if unattended.

Preventing Heat-Related Illness

- **Dress for the heat.** Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy. It is also a good idea to wear hats or to use an umbrella.
- **Drink water.** Carry water or juice with you and drink continuously even if you do not feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which dehydrate the body.
- **Eat small meals and eat more often.** Avoid foods that are high in protein which increase metabolic heat. Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician.
- **Slow down.** Avoid strenuous activity. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.
- **Stay indoors when possible.** Take regular breaks when engaged in physical activity on warm days. Take time out to find a cool place. If you recognize that you, or someone else, is showing the signals of a heat-related illness, stop activity and find a cool place. Remember, have fun, but stay cool!

Know What These Heat-Related Terms Mean

Heat cramps: Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion. They usually involve the abdominal muscles or the legs. It is generally thought that the loss of water and salt from heavy sweating causes the cramps.

Heat Exhaustion: Heat exhaustion is less dangerous than heat stroke. It typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a warm, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Fluid loss causes blood flow to decrease in the vital organs, resulting in a form of shock. With heat exhaustion, sweat does not evaporate as it should, possibly because of high humidity or too many layers of clothing. As a result, the body is not cooled properly. Signals include cool, moist, pale, flushed or red skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea or vomiting; dizziness; and exhaustion. Body temperature will be near normal.

Heat Stroke: Also known as sunstroke, heat stroke is life-threatening. The victim's temperature control system, which produces sweat-

ing to cool the body, stops working. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly. Signals include hot, red and dry skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. Body temperature can be very high—sometimes as high as 105°F.

General Care for Heat Emergencies

- **Cool the Body**
- **Give Fluids**
- **Minimize Shock**

For heat cramps or heat exhaustion: Get the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. If the person is fully awake and alert, give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not let him or her drink too quickly. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, as they can make conditions worse. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths such as towels or wet sheets. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number if the person refuses water, vomits or loses consciousness.

For heat stroke: Heat stroke is a life-threatening situation! Help is needed fast. Call 9-1-1 or your local EMS number. Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the body. Wrap wet sheets around the body and fan it. If you have ice packs or cold packs, wrap them in a cloth and place them on each of the victim's wrists and ankles, in the armpits and on the neck to cool the large blood vessels. (Do not use rubbing alcohol because it closes the skin's pores and prevents heat loss.) Watch for signals of breathing problems and make sure the airway is clear. Keep the person lying down.



You Make a Difference!

Submitted by our veterans and their families. We welcome more contributions from LVD, Stockton, Modesto, San Jose, and Monterey.

This is a letter of recommendation for **Karen Kopolnek**, (MPD) Audiology & Speech Pathology Service. She is enthusiastic about her profession. She has an endless supply of energy and joie de vivre for her work. How lucky you are to have her helping veterans! She made learning fun and is a consummate professional. She is passionate about helping people overcome speech-reading challenges.

This letter is to thank **Dr. Christopher Barnard** and **Dr. Rebecca Short**, (PAD) Dermatology Service, for the painless surgery and competence demonstrated. I felt comfortable and was at ease throughout the whole surgery.

Dr. Chandra was completely booked and the same day doctor was not capable of doing such a procedure as I needed. **Dr. Ankia Chandrasekaran**, (Monterey Clinic) Medical Service, volunteered to add me to his already overbooked schedule. He did an outstanding procedure and his bedside manner is outstanding. I could not ask for finer care. I let Administration know sometimes when I have concerns, but thought it was extremely important for you to know of the outstanding care and dedication received at the Monterey Clinic because of the care of Dr. Chandrasekaran. Please give him my highest regards.

We are writing to you in appreciation of your staff at **Nursing Home 2 in Livermore**. A friend's mother was just admitted there. We attended an Individual Health Management meeting and discussed her circumstances with the team chaired by **Joycelyn King, R.N.**, (LVD) Nursing Service. All the members of the team had done a superb job

evaluating her medical situation and explained matters to us with clarity and sincerity. At the conclusion of the meeting we expressed our appreciation for their concerns and efforts and we were most appreciative of their genuine empathy and preparation. We congratulate you on the thoroughness of your staff, their presentation, and their professional care.

I had microscopic knee surgery by **Dr. Kirk Mendez**, (PAD) Surgical Service, and his team. Everyone was extremely pleasant and professional. I am walking better a week later than I did before I went in for surgery. I could not have asked for better treatment even if I had gone to the most prominent physicians outside of the VA. Your follow-up, professionalism, and patient concern was evident. I especially would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Mendez and the anesthesiologist **Dr. Bridget Vedder**, (PAD) Anesthesiology Service.

I need to tell you that I am simply amazed at the quality of patient care I have encountered at the **VA Modesto Clinic** in particular and the **VA Palo Alto Hospital**, relative to female care. At present, I feel I have as good as, if not better care, than I could conceivably obtain via many private practices. In fact, I have found Modesto VA personnel by far more professional than many private offices I have entered. Furthermore, my primary care provider is **Dr. Calvin Reckord**, Medical Service, who is without a doubt one of the best doctors I have ever encountered. He listens thoroughly to what his patients say and he has a sense of humor. Thank you so very much!

VAPAHCS Offers HACU Students a Great Experience!

This summer, VA Palo Alto Health Care System participated in the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) National Internship Program (HNIP), by recruiting two college students for a summer internship. These internship programs give college students direct experience in a diversity of careers in the federal and corporate sectors.

HACU Intern Verónica Morales Lleras was born and raised in San Juan Puerto Rico. Currently she is a senior in the College of Social Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus. Her major is in Labor Relations and she will be graduating on May 2004. During this summer she is working in the Office of the Director under the guidance of Carmen Lozano, EEO Manager of VAPAHCS. After Verónica graduates her plans are to begin working towards getting a PhD in Human Resources and Industrial Relations with a minor in Caribbean and Latin American Studies. Her research interests are safety and diversity in the workplace and Immigrants and the U.S. Labor Market.

Mariela E. Zayas was born in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. She attends University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus. Mariela is beginning

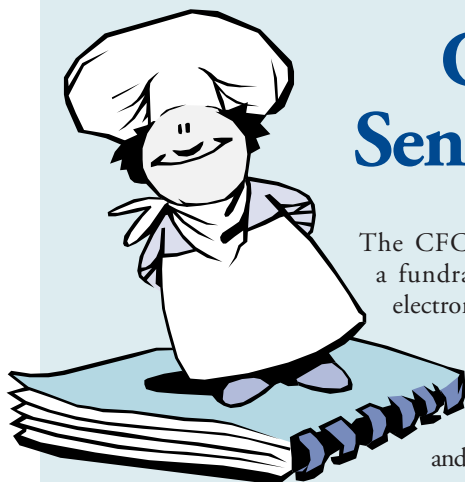
her senior year and majoring in Human Resources Management. She expects to graduate in May, 2005. After completing the Bachelors Degree she looks forward to pursuing a Masters Degree in Hospital Management.

HACU was established in 1986 with a founding membership of eighteen institutions. Today, HACU represents more than 300

colleges and universities committed to Hispanic higher education success in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Latin America and Spain. Thousands of young Hispanics benefit from HACU with internships, scholarships, college retention and advancement programs, precollegiate support, and career development opportunities and programs.



Mariela E. Zayas (left) and Verónica Morales Lleras (right) with Director Elizabeth Joyce Freeman.



Get published! Send us your recipes!

The CFC Committee is developing a unique cookbook as a fundraiser. VAPAWEB has a CFC page where you can electronically submit a recipe for the 2003 CFC Cookbook!

Proceeds will be divided up amongst the four campaigns (Santa Clara/San Benito Counties, San Francisco/Alameda Counties, Monterey County, and the Central Valley Campaign), unless otherwise designated.

Click here to submit your recipe:

<http://vaww.palo-alto.med.va.gov/frontoffice/cfc/index.htm>

If you do not have a computer, you may contact either Lori Russo, ext. 66726, or Lea Namba, ext 65008, for the recipe form.

Recipes must be submitted by: August 22nd

**2003 Combined Federal Campaign
Cookbook**



THE epicenter

is published monthly
by and for employees of the
VA Palo Alto Health Care System.

Submissions should be received by
the 1st working day of the month to
be included in upcoming issues.

Due to space limitations, it is not
possible to publish all submissions.

We welcome any comments,
suggestions or story ideas
you may have; please contact the
Communications Officer (00A) at
ext. 64888 or directly at
650-858-3925.

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CARES: Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services Comment Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

My relationship to the VA is: _____

☐ Veterans Service Organization (VSO). Please name VSO: _____

☐ Congressional Office. Please name office: _____

☐ Veteran/Patient

☐ VA Employee

☐ Medical School Affiliate. Please name Medical School: _____

☐ Volunteer

☐ Department of Defense. Please name Agency: _____

☐ Labor Union. AFGE 1601 _____ AFGE 2110 _____

☐ Other _____

Comments: _____

Please feel free to add additional comments if desired.

Submit to:
William Ball (00B)